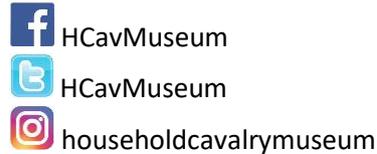




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## Podcast 18 ~ HOUSEHOLD CAVALRY ANECDOTES

### LIFE GUARD COLONELS

On her Accession in 1837, Queen Victoria declined the role of Colonel-in-Chief of the three Regiments of her Household Cavalry, on the grounds that she was a woman. The posts remained vacant until 1880 when she appointed The Prince of Wales, the future King Edward VII, to all three colonelcies.

Notorious for her long absences from the public gaze after the death of the Prince Consort in 1861, Queen Victoria acquired the nickname of the 'Widow of Windsor'.

However, in 1897, she was persuaded to appear in public for her Diamond Jubilee, the principle event of which was a Royal Procession from Buckingham Palace to St Paul's Cathedral for a Service of Thanksgiving. This service was to be held in the open air at the foot of the steps to the West Transept, an unusual arrangement which was necessary because the elderly, lame and overweight Queen was unable to climb the long flight of steps into the Cathedral. It was a proposal that did not please everyone...

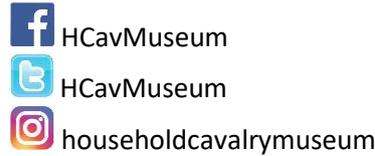
'Has one ever heard of such a thing!' wrote an outraged Princess Augusta of Cambridge, Grand Duchess of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, to her niece the Duchess of York (the future Queen Mary), 'After 60 years Reign to Thank God in the street!!!'

The route to the Cathedral, then back to the Palace via Lambeth, was six miles long. It was lined all the way in blazing sunshine by shoulder-to-shoulder uniformed soldiers and sailors, whilst the Royal Procession itself consisted of seventeen horse-drawn carriages, dozens of the



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Queen's royal and imperial relations from across Europe and assorted princely rulers from within the Empire, all mounted, and eight thousand representatives of the cavalry of the Empire. It was probably the largest number of horses ever to have appeared as one formation on London's streets.

The Sovereign's Escort for this vast equestrian parade was provided by the 2nd Life Guards under the command of **Lieutenant Colonel Douglas Cochrane, 12th Earl of Dundonald**. Riding immediately behind the Queen's open Semi-State Landau, Lord Dundonald had trouble controlling his charger and repeatedly tried to calm her by saying: '*Steady, old lady! Whao, old girl!*' For the early part of the Procession, Queen Victoria thought that he was talking to her and was most certainly not amused; this unintentional act of *lèse majesté* may have prevented Dundonald's name from appearing in the Diamond Jubilee Honours List.

The Earl had earlier distinguished himself on the Nile Expedition, otherwise known as the Relief of Gordon (1884-85), during which he was in the Heavy Camel Regiment and was severely injured when an ammunition box dropped on top of him.

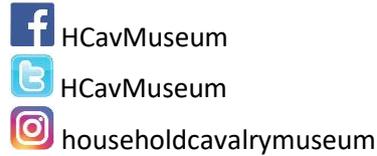
His reputation may not have been further enhanced when, whilst commanding the 2nd Life Guards, he was known as an innovator of military equipment, which was not a quality prized by the War Office. Dundonald's inventions included a wheeled, horse-drawn machinegun, a waterproof bag for hauling men across rivers, a hand warmer and an improved teapot.

The Earl lost his military reputation altogether in the Second Boer War when, without authorisation from the War Office and at his own expense, he travelled out to South Africa where the then C-in-C, General Sir Redvers Buller VC, tasked him with organising and commanding the Mounted Brigade of the South Natal Field Force. For his inept leadership of this Brigade during the Relief of Ladysmith, Dundonald earned himself the contemptuous soubriquet of 'Dundoodle'.



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After command of the Militia in Canada, during the First World War, the Earl was Chairman of the Admiralty Committee on Smoke Screens, an appropriate appointment given his reputation for innovation and his childhood dream of serving in the Royal Navy.

Also on duty on the Queen's carriage during the Diamond Jubilee Royal Procession was the seventy-five-year-old Gold Stick-in-Waiting and Colonel of the 2nd Life Guards, **Major General Richard Curzon-Howe, 3rd Earl Howe**. Despite his age, Lord Howe was correctly uniformed in his 2nd Life Guards' Mounted Review Order consisting of jack boots, leather pantaloons, quilted tunic, steel cuirasses, leather gauntlets, a heavy sword and a silver-plated helmet.

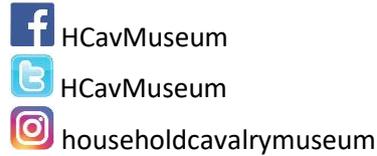
Although – unlike Lord Dundonald – he had no trouble with his mount, on the return leg of the Procession, Lord Howe was overcome by the heat, fainted and fell off his horse, a painful event that was repeated on The Mall at the end of The Queen's Birthday Parade 2018 by the seventy-nine year old Colonel of The Life Guards, Field Marshal Lord Guthrie.

In 1897, Lord Howe was the only man on the parade so to do, but his unauthorised dismount didn't prevent him being awarded a GCMG in the Diamond Jubilee Honours List, albeit for his royal service as Lord Lieutenant of Leicestershire rather than for his ability to remain in the saddle, an honour also bestowed upon Lord Guthrie upon his retirement as Colonel in 2019. The story in this video is drawn from stories in my book, *The Drum Horse in the Fountain*, which is available on Amazon.



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written and recorded by  
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